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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the quality of the education at the Capitol Page School and suggests ways to improve oversight of the school operation. The Capitol Page School, operated for the Congress by the District of Columbia Public Schools, provides educational instruction to the approximately 150 young men and women serving as pages for the Congress. A Department of Health, Education, and Welfare panel reviewing the school operation concluded that the overall program is adequate, but made several recommendations for improvement. The panel recommended improvements in school accountability and oversight, including needs for (1) a formal arrangement with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives for educating pages, (2) complete and accurate accounting data on Capitol Page School transactions, (3) reporting periodically and annually on school operations and page performance, and (4) better documentation of selection of Capitol Page School teachers and on obtaining substitute teachers. The panel also recommended that the pages be appointed for one year and that District officials investigate the extent of overpayments to Capitol Page School coaches. (Author/JM)

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REPORT BY THE

Comptroller General

OF THE UNITED STATES

9934

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Improvements Recommended For Better Oversight Of The Capitol Page School

ED176405

The District of Columbia's Board of Education should enter into a formal arrangement with the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate to define and improve the Capitol Page School's educational and financial requirements.

The Board also should provide for reporting periodically on problems, accomplishments, and recommendations for improving Capitol Page School operations and page performance to help congressional overseers better evaluate Capitol Page School operations.

An educational panel from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare concluded that the administrative arrangements, programs offered, facilities, and conduct of the Capitol Page School are adequate for a limited period but that increased supervised study and more elective courses are needed.

The report was requested by the Chairmen, Subcommittees on Legislative House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-192655

Chairman, Subcommittee on Legislative
House Committee on Appropriations
Chairman, Subcommittee on Legislative
Senate Committee on Appropriations

This report discusses quality of education at the Capitol Page School and suggests ways to improve oversight of the school operation. The review was made at the request of your Subcommittees on June 15, 1978, and July 19, 1978, respectively. This report summarizes the results of our review.

We are sending copies of this report to the Doorkeeper, House of Representatives; the Sergeant at Arms, United States Senate; the Secretary of the Senate; the Clerk of the House of Representatives; and other interested congressional offices.

Comptroller General
of the United States

REPORT BY THE
COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR BETTER OVERSIGHT OF THE CAPITOL PAGE SCHOOL

D I G E S T

The Capitol Page School, operated for the Congress by the District of Columbia Public Schools, provides educational programs and instructions to young men and women while they are serving as pages for the Congress. During school year 1977-1978, 157 students attended the Capitol Page School.

A Department of Health, Education, and Welfare panel concluded that the administrative arrangements, programs offered, facilities, and general conduct of the school are adequate for a limited term experience. But the panel also concluded that the educational program at the Capitol Page School could be improved by overcoming such limitations as short class attendance time, few elective courses, and lack of supervised study after working hours.

The panel recommended that the pages be appointed for 1 year to provide optimum experience in learning the legislative process and to provide the Congress with adequate page service. This will permit the Capitol Page School to improve the instructional program and provide a more regular schedule for a more stable student body. (See ch. 2.)

The District of Columbia Board of Education should improve the Capitol Page School accountability and oversight. Areas of improvement include the need for (1) a formal arrangement with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives for educating pages, (2) complete and accurate accounting data on Capitol Page School transactions, (3) reporting periodically and annually on School operations and page performance, and (4) better documentation of selection of Capitol Page School teachers and on obtaining substitute teachers.

Tear Sheet. Upon removal, the report cover date should be noted hereon.

GAO is recommending that the District of Columbia Board of Education enter into a formal arrangement with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives. The arrangement should include education and funding requirements and responsibilities for management, oversight, and evaluation of the Capitol Page School.

Financial data recorded in the accounting system for the Capitol Page School is incomplete and inaccurate. Therefore, its accounting records are not reliable for use in preparing reports on Capitol Page School operations and budgets submitted to the Congress. GAO is recommending that the District of Columbia Board of Education improve the accuracy of its financial data on the Capitol Page School.

Several routine reports are prepared by the Capitol Page School staff, but the reports do not provide information showing what the school is doing to improve school operations. A summary report showing school accomplishments, operating costs, problems, and recommendations could assist congressional overseers in evaluating what the Capitol Page School has done each year. GAO is recommending that the Board of Education prepare a yearly memorandum progress report showing the Capitol Page School costs, accomplishments, problems, and recommendations.

In the past the District of Columbia Public Schools has not adequately documented its actions pertaining to the selection of new teachers and the hiring of substitute teachers. Such information is needed to help management better evaluate the school's operations.

The Capitol Page School basketball coach was overpaid about $2,500 for fiscal years 1976-78. Other Capitol Page School teachers were paid the correct salary rates. Action has been taken by the District of Columbia Public Schools to correct the coach's salary beginning with school year 1978-79. Also, District

officials have agreed to investigate the extent of the overpayments to Capitol Page School coaches and determine whether recovery of the overpayments can be made under applicable laws.

The Superintendent of Schools did not take issue with any of GAO's recommendations.

Tear Sheet

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ABBREVIATIONS

CPS	Capitol Page School
DCPS	District of Columbia Public Schools
FCD	Financial Operations Division
GAO	General Accounting Office
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
OE	Office of Education

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Chairmen of the Legislative Subcommittees, House and Senate Appropriation Committees requested on June 15, 1978, and July 19, 1978, that we review the Capitol Page School (CPS) operations. It was later agreed with the Subcommittee staff that we would provide the Subcommittees with data on the (1) quality of education received by pages as determined by officials of the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), (2) funding of CPS operations, (3) responsibilities for dismissing pages who do not maintain prescribed academic achievement, (4) salary paid to a basketball coach, (5) selection of teachers and their qualifications, and (6) use of substitute teachers.

RESPONSIBILITIES, PROGRAMS, OPERATIONS, AND STAFFING

The Capitol Page School was established by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (P.L. 79-601). The act authorizes and directs the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives to enter into an arrangement with the Board of Education of the District of Columbia for the education of pages. The arrangement is to include a provision for reimbursement to the District for additional expenses incurred by its public school system in implementing the arrangement.

The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the Committee on House Administration provide legislative oversight of CPS; the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations provide budget review; and the House Committees on Personnel, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Floor Leader of the Senate coordinate page appointments and/or decide which congressional members should appoint pages.

The Doorkeeper and Sergeant at Arms' responsibilities include supervision of pages while at work. The pages' guardians or parents are responsible for their safety, well-being, and supervision while the pages are living in the District of Columbia after working hours and while they are traveling to and from the House of Representatives and the Senate. Under the terms of Senate Resolution 112, Senators appointing a girl page must file in writing with the Sergeant at Arms a statement agreeing that the Senator will be responsible for the safe transportation of the

female page he appoints between the Senate and the page's place of local abode and return; and will assume full responsibility for the safety, well-being, and strict supervision of such female page while the page is in her place of local abode.

CPS provides secondary (grades 9 through 12) educational programs and instruction to young men and women while they are serving as pages for the Congress or working for individual members of Congress. Other minors who are congressional employees and certified by the Secretary of the Senate or Clerk of the House of Representatives can also attend CPS. CPS is in the Library of Congress building, located at First Street, SE. The school is on the third floor occupying nine rooms--an administrative office, storeroom, multi-purpose room, and six classrooms.

Courses include English, mathematics, social studies, and sciences. Elective courses, such as accounting and typing, are available as needed to meet differing requirements and preferences of the pages. Other activities, such as basketball and speaker forums, are also available.

There are 30 classes scheduled each day at CPS beginning at 6:10 a.m. and continuing to 10:30 a.m. Classes are 45 minutes in duration, unless the Senate or House of Representatives goes into session prior to 11:30 a.m. In such instances, classes may be shortened so that pages can be at work 1 hour and 15 minutes before the session begins. Pages work until the Congress adjourns. If the Congress adjourns at 10 p.m. or later, pages on duty at that time are excused from school the following day. During the 1977-78 school year the House had two sessions and the Senate nine that lasted past 10 p.m.

The staff at CPS consists of a principal, who also serves as a student counselor; an administrative aide; and six full-time teachers. Each teacher is certified by the Board of Examiners, Board of Education, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Some of the teachers must be certified to teach in several subjects. Teachers must teach these subjects for grades 9 through 12. Appendix I shows the credentials of teachers at the school for school year 1977-78.

ACCREDITATION AND PURPOSE

CPS is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The Association is an independent voluntary organization of nonprofit institutions and

agencies. Its objective is to encourage quality education and to facilitate the development of better working relations among higher institutions, secondary schools, and other educational agencies. Accreditation officially certifies that a school has met prescribed qualitative standards in terms of its own stated philosophy and objectives.

Secondary school programs are based on each individual school's philosophy and objectives. Accreditation implies that these objectives are soundly conceived and that the educational program is so devised that those objectives are being realized. According to the policies and procedures of the Association " * * * the work completed in accredited schools can be accepted for transfer of credit without question when the objectives of two schools are similar." Accreditation also suggests that a school can make needed school improvements and that schools are implementing their goals and meeting standards of the Association.

PAGE APPOINTMENTS, DUTIES, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, AND SALARY

Pages are selected by members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives is authorized 71 pages and the Senate 30. Senate pages can be appointed beginning at age 14 and House pages can be appointed beginning at age 16. They can be appointed for varying terms throughout the year. Pages assist members of Congress by serving as messengers, carrying material between the Capitol and members' offices and committees. They also ensure that each member is furnished documents to be considered on the floors of the House and Senate.

During their term of appointment, pages may attend school in the District. The average length of appointment for pages attending CPS during the 1977-78 school year (Sept. through June) was 7.2 months. During that school year 157 students attended CPS. The CPS attendance period is governed by a page's appointment period. Some pages attended CPS for 1 month and others the entire school year or more.

Pages have the option of enrolling in CPS full-time or of continuing courses from their home school districts. Those who elect to continue studies (supervised study program) from their home school districts study at CPS and are under the supervision and control of CPS teachers. During school year 1977-78, 43 of the 157 students were in the supervised study program.

The following table shows the varying length of appointments for pages attending CPS in school year 1977-78.

Length of Appointments
for Students Attending CPS
During School Year 1977-78
(Months)

Enrolled	Up to 2 months	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12	13-24	Over 24	Total
Capitol Page School	12	14	20	5	32	14	12	5	114
Supervised Study Program	34	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	43
Total	46	23	20	5	32	14	12	5	a/157

a/Five of the students were not pages--they worked for congressional offices.

The annual salary of a page working in the House of Representatives is $7,215, except that the Speaker's and supervisory pages receive $9,561. A Senate page's annual salary is $9,072. Pages pay their living expenses, such as meals and lodging, during their appointment period.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Organizationally, CPS is located in Region IV of the DCPS system, which is headed by an Assistant Superintendent of Schools. The DCPS education rules and policies are applicable to CPS. A Region IV official said that the Region has responsibility for evaluating school personnel, providing courses, curriculum guides, and making sure all courses meet approved DCPS standards.

DCPS is responsible for preparing the CPS budget and performing certain administrative and support services, such as payroll and personnel services for CPS staff. It also accounts for CPS funds and procures supplies, etc., for the School's operation. CPS sends reports to House committees, congressional sponsors, the Doorkeeper, and Sergeant at Arms on the pages' academic progress and school attendance. CPS also prepares periodic progress reports on accreditation reviews and submits them to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools until any recommendations are disposed of.

SCHOOL FUNDING

Congress appropriates funds to operate CPS on the basis of estimated budgets submitted each year by the District of Columbia Board of Education. An amount is appropriated to the House of Representatives under the heading "Education of Pages" "* * * to be advanced and credited to the applicable appropriation of the District of Columbia."

DCPS uses its funds to operate the school and sometime during the school year receives payment from the House of Representatives in the amount of the appropriation as reimbursement for operating the school. For fiscal year 1978 the District received $193,700. (App. II shows CPS payments for fiscal year 1978.)

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Our review of CPS covered 3 school years--1975-76, 1976-77, and 1977-78. We discussed CPS operations with the principal, his administrative aide, teachers, and pages; Library of Congress officials; congressional committee staffs; pages' work supervisors; District of Columbia Public School accounting and Region IV officials; and officials of the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. We reviewed and analyzed records concerning the CPS budget, funds, supplies, and equipment for fiscal years 1976 through 1978. We collected data for specific periods on teacher absences and the use of substitute teachers. We also visited the school facilities.

As agreed with the requestors of this review, we have included in appendix V different suggestions made by concerned parties for changes in CPS operations.

CHAPTER 2

QUALITY OF EDUCATION AT THE CAPITOL PAGE SCHOOL

According to an ad hoc education panel selected by officials from the HEW Office of Education (OE) specifically to review the quality of CPS educational programs, the administrative arrangements, programs offered, facilities, and general conduct of the school are adequate for a limited term experience. The panel recommended that consideration be given to establishing a policy of appointing pages for 1 year to enable CPS to plan for and provide an improved educational program for a more stable student body. The panel also identified several CPS limitations, such as short and irregular classes, which, if overcome, would improve educational programs at CPS. The OE panel members are involved with public school education programs. See appendix III for their credentials.

Under Federal laws and regulations OE provides professional and financial assistance to State and local governments to strengthen education. As a part of its mission, OE formulates policy for and coordinates its activities dealing with preschool, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education.

We provided the OE panel with information it requested, which included a description of CPS operations and CPS teacher qualifications, course program planning documents, policies, and graduation requirements. The panel concluded that:

> "The school's major objective is to provide secondary students an interim basic educational program while serving and learning the legislative processes of government."
>
> "We concur that providing students the opportunity for this unique experience is of great value. Although students spend a limited period of time at the Capitol Page School, they are not being deprived of the total high school experience they need. The courses or other education experiences needed can be obtained from high schools in their home towns prior to or after their term. We generally believe the administrative

arrangements, programs offered, staff qualifications, facilities, and general conduct of the school are adequate for a limited term experience but could not be considered a substitute for a comprehensive secondary school program."

The panel recommended that:

"* * * consideration be given to establishing a policy of enrolling students for a period of one year. In our judgment this time period would provide optimum experiences in learning the legislative process and provide adequate services as pages. At the same time, it would permit staff in the school the opportunity to plan for and provide an improved instructional program for a more stable student body following a more regular schedule."

The OE panel members also mentioned the following school limitations which, if overcome, would help improve education at the school.

--Short Classes. Most public schools have a minimum of 55 minutes for each class. CPS has a maximum 45 minutes for each class.

--Irregular Class Attendance. Page work schedules in the House of Representatives and Senate often require that classes be shortened or canceled. The total class time available during a given year is considerably less at CPS than other schools. (GAO note: For example, if the Senate goes into session before 11:30 a.m. CPS classes are shortened for some of the Senate pages so that a portion of all classes is taught. Not all pages are affected on the days classes are shortened. In school year 1977-78 the Senate went into early session 85 school days. We were not able to determine the amount of class time missed by individual pages because records were not available.)

--Lack of Supervised Study. The work schedule most often precludes any teacher-supervised education or extracurricular activities after work for those who want to participate and have the time available.

--Limited Access to Reference Material. Although the Library of Congress is available to the students, their early classes (6:10 a.m.) and late work hours generally limit the time available for access to the library. The CPS library is limited in the number of volumes and selection of reference material. (GAO note: According to the CPS principal, students are able to take care of their library needs through the District public libraries, the Library of Congress, and the CPS library.)

--Limited Facilities. CPS does not have a full range of facilities, such as shop rooms, laboratories, music rooms, and the like, that most public schools have.

--Limited Course Offerings. CPS can offer only a few elective courses because of its small faculty and many required courses. (GAO note: In school year 1977-78 seven electives were offered consisting of accounting, typing, economics, anthropology, business law, modern history, and ancient and medieval history.)

--Limited Student Activities. CPS students do not have the wide range of student activities, such as a band and drama club.

CONCLUSIONS

In the opinion of the OE panel members, pages are receiving an adequate education at CPS. Although, as the panel pointed out, there are some limitations at CPS, pages, while serving the Congress, are not being deprived of the total high school experience they need. The courses or other education experiences needed can be obtained from high schools in their home towns prior to or after their term at CPS. Overcoming these limitations could improve the educational program at the school.

The OE panel recommended that enrolling pages for a 1-year period would provide the optimum experiences in learning the legislative process and provide adequate services as pages and would enable CPS to provide an improved educational program. The CPS principal agreed that establishing a standard 1-year enrollment period would assist the school in providing better educational programs. He said that if all pages were enrolled for the same time period it would (1) improve educational continuity and

allow CPS to develop firm class plans and curricula offerings without the necessity to continually make adjustments as pages, with differing requirements, leave and enter during the school year, (2) reduce administrative work associated with entering and departing pages, and (3) allow activities to be planned in advance on the basis of sure knowledge of class composition and needs.

CHAPTER 3

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OPERATING AND FINANCING THE CAPITOL PAGE SCHOOL

CPS operations can be improved by:

--Formalizing a written arangement between Congress and the District of Columbia Board of Education which would include responsibilities for the operations, management, financing, oversight, and evaluation of CPS.

--Requiring an accounting system that produces complete and accurate financial information on the cost of operating CPS. Complete and accurate financial data is necessary for budgets submitted to the Congress and reports for management.

--Requiring the District of Columbia Board of Education to report during the school year to appropriate congressional committees and officials any problems, actions, and recommendations as warranted, to improve CPS operations. A memorandum progress report to Congress should be prepared and submitted with the CPS annual budget request discussing problems, accomplishments, and recommendations for improving CPS' operations.

WRITTEN ARANGEMENT SHOULD HELP GUIDE THE SCHOOL IN PROVIDING SERVICE TO THE CONGRESS

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 (P.L. 79-601) authorizes and directs the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives to enter into an arrangement with the District of Columbia Board of Education for the education of pages. The arrangement is to include a reimbursement provision for additional expenses incurred in implementing the arrangement. Additional DCPS expenses incurred for CPS include teacher salaries, rent, utilities, supplies, and equipment.

The Board of Education's Office of General Counsel advised us that it has "no record of any arrangement or agreement, either oral or written." Without an "arrangement" it is difficult for the Board of Education to know exactly what services the Congress expects it to provide, under what circumstances, and for what reimbursement. For example, the

lack of a formal arrangement could have contributed to the inaccurate and incomplete accounting for CPS operations and to inadequate information for the Congress to remedy any problem.

A formal written arrangement between the Board of Education and the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives would help establish appropriate responsibilities and accountabilities for those who have jurisdiction over CPS. The arrangement should clearly state the services to be performed, responsibilities for carrying them out, basis for reimbursement, and accountability reporting required to monitor and evaluate CPS operations and activities. The formal arrangement should also include a description of the type of information needed by interested congressional parties and others in evaluating the pages' academic performance. (See p. 18.)

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING FOR THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE ACCURATE AND COMPLETE AND SHOULD SUPPORT BUDGET REQUESTS

An accounting system which accurately and completely records all financial transactions would (1) provide control of funds and property and (2) serve as a basis for financial reports for management and budget planning. Such a system assures management that funds and property entrusted to it are used prudently and for desired purposes.

The financial data recorded in the accounting system for CPS is incomplete, inaccurate, and thus unreliable for use in preparing reports on the CPS operations and budgets submitted to the Congress justifying future fund needs. For example, our analysis of the accounting records and other available data for fiscal year 1978 showed that the costs for CPS were inaccurate.

The principal cause of this condition is the failure of DCPS officials to give adequate attention to the accounting for the CPS funds and operations. The Director, Division of Fiscal Control, who is responsible for DCPS accounting, said that the total CPS funds are minimal in relation to the total amount of funds appropriated for DCPS. He said that because of the errors in the CPS accounting records, a detailed analysis would be required to determine the cost of operating CPS. He said that DCPS did not closely monitor the operation to make sure that the financial records for CPS are accurate because DCPS receives a fixed amount for the

operation of CPS and it makes little difference whether DCPS spent more or less to operate CPS.

We disagree. Since the Congress appropriates a specific amount each year for the operation of CPS, complete and accurate records should be maintained for the CPS operation. Unless this is done and reliable data are used, the Congress could be misled each year by the CPS budget requests and justifications on the amount of funds needed for the coming year. The Congress also cannot effectively evaluate CPS financial needs or determine the effect that fund changes might have on page education.

Reliable accounting data needed

DCPS attempts to develop and accumulate financial data for CPS. Documents authorizing obligation and disbursement of funds are coded so that the amounts can be charged to appropriate categories of expenditure for CPS.

The official payment records are maintained by the District's Financial Operations Divison (FOD). FOD prepares a summary report which includes the amount of CPS funds obligated and the dollar amounts of goods and services received and paid for each fiscal year. The report prepared by FOD on DCPS operations is by category of expenditures and DCPS region. A separate accounting for CPS is included with the DCPS Region IV report.

Our review of the summary report for fiscal year 1978 showed that it was incomplete and inaccurate. For example, it did not include salaries and benefits paid to substitute teachers ($631). These costs were not coded to the CPS but charged to an account for substitute teachers for the entire DCPS. The summary report did not include the cost of teachers' retirement (about $9,903). Procedures did not provide for charging these costs to CPS. Retirement costs are recorded in total for the DCPS. Also, supplies purchased for CPS were incorrectly coded and recorded as costs for DCPS schools.

Because, for example, vouchers and requisitions were not sequentially numbered and because of errors in coding, we do not know whether we have accounted for all the costs. Coding errors have existed since at least fiscal year 1976. In fiscal years 1976 and 1977, costs of $2,526 and $1,010 respectively were not coded as CPS costs. The costs were for nonpersonnel items, such as textbooks and subscriptions.

In July 1978, the DCPS Deputy Superintendent, in response to a request from the Office of Finance, House of Representatives, reported on certain costs of operating CPS for school years 1975-76 and 1976-77. The report shows that the cost of nonpersonnel items such as supplies was $2,066 and $1,956 respectively for these years. This cost data was obtained from the summary report on obligation and expenditures for fiscal years 1976 and 1977. Our detailed analysis of the available records disclosed that the total costs for these 2 years were $4,592 and $2,966 respectively.

BETTER REPORTING CAN IMPROVE CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OF THE SCHOOL

Better reporting by DCPS of CPS operations, such as for page academic progress, school accomplishments, and costs, could help the Board of Education and congressional overseers more effectively evaluate and judge whether CPS is performing as expected.

Although several routine reports, such as student absences, grades, and course failure warnings, are sent to certain oversight groups, the reports do not provide information showing what the school is doing to improve page academic performance and school operations. Also, reports are not prepared for all students who are not maintaining required grades for retention in CPS. (The need for improved reporting is discussed more fully in ch. 4.)

There is no summary report on school operations. A summary report showing CPS' accomplishments, operating costs, problems, and recommendations to correct problems and change future CPS educational requirements or operations could assist congressional overseers in evaluating what CPS is doing, how it is doing it, and whether the Congress is receiving full benefits for each dollar spent.

According to the CPS principal and congressional committees involved in CPS oversight, the Congress has not been routinely kept abreast of CPS activities, accomplishments, and problems. Parties concerned could see potential benefits to the Congress and the Board of Education receiving a memorandum progress report on CPS operations containing such information as justification for proposed changes in funding, problems caused by legislation or regulations, and changes needed in educational programs and page supervision. The report should be prepared by the persons most familiar with CPS operations.

CONCLUSIONS

A written arrangement should be made between the Secretary of the Senate and Clerk of the House and the District of Columbia Board of Education. Such an arrangement would delineate the responsibilities of the Board in operating the CPS and provide the Congress with a basis for judging performance. The arrangement should include provisions for reporting costs and operational data.

DCPS did not maintain complete and accurate accounting costs for operating CPS. The Deputy Superintendent, Office of Management Service, said that DCPS would not incur any additional cost to properly and accurately record costs of operating CPS. DCPS must initiate, process, record, and report financial transactions irrespective of what accounts are used to accumulate this information.

A memorandum progress report is not prepared showing the cost of operating CPS and its accomplishments and problems. The Board of Education and all interested congressional committees and persons are therefore not adequately informed and cannot effectively evaluate CPS operations and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Board of Education:

--Make a formal arrangement with the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives for the operation of the Capitol Page School.

--Assure that complete and accurate records are maintained for the operating costs of CPS.

--Prepare and submit with its CPS budget a memorandum progress report on CPS operations including costs, educational program data, accomplishments, problems, and recommended solutions.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Superintendent of Schools in a letter dated April 3, 1979, advised us that DCPS strongly supports the recommendations that a written contractual arrangement be arrived at between DCPS and the appropriate congressional offices for the operation of CPS.

The Superintendent stated that most of the coding errors encountered in the record for nonpersonnel expenditures for CPS should be overcome with the unified financial system now being developed by the Temporary Commission on Financial Oversight for the District. He pointed out that in the meantime, the written arrangement could provide that the CPS account could be established outside the regular DCPS appropriation fund accounts, such as is currently being done for Federal grants, and thus avoid any possibility of a confusion in the accounting records.

The Superintendent advised us that much of the problem of accounting records and budget estimates we have identified can be attributable to the disparity of fiscal year and school year. He said that if appropriations for DCPS were changed to coincide with the school year, DCPS could more clearly determine the cost of each school year without the necessity for transfer between fiscal years.

CHAPTER 4

OTHER CPS PROBLEMS

This chapter discusses (1) dismissal of pages who do not maintain prescribed academic levels, (2) the salary paid to a basketball coach, (3) selection of CPS teachers, and (4) the use of substitute teachers for foreign language and other subjects.

DISMISSAL OF PAGES WHO DO NOT MAINTAIN PRESCRIBED ACADEMIC LEVELS

The House requires pages to maintain at least a C average while attending CPS, except that pages appointed by Republican members in the House are required by the House Republican Personnel Committee to maintain at least a B average. According to the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Secretary for the Majority, pages who work under their supervision are expected to maintain a C average or above. The Senate Secretary for the Minority stated that for Republican-appointed pages, grade requirements are handled on a case-by-case basis. Failure of pages to maintain prescribed academic levels could result in termination from the page program. Only the persons who appoint pages can dismiss them. The CPS principal said that on occasion he may be verbally informed of the reason for a page's withdrawal from the school, but he does not receive written notification of the reasons for all pages leaving CPS. Records are not available showing whether pages have been dismissed, because of poor academic performance.

According to CPS data for students who attended classes at CPS during the 1977-78 school year, the average final grades received by 107 1/ students were as follows.

1/There were 157 students at CPS in school year 1977-78. Forty-three students were in the supervised study program (41 pages and 2 congressional office workers). Grades were not available for 7 pages.

Number of students	Average final grade
62	B and above
29	C
11	D
5	F
107	

The CPS principal and teachers told us that excessive absences from class was the primary cause contributing to students receiving grades D and F. They said that some absences were excused by written request from the parent, guardian, or work supervisor. The principal and teachers said that other reasons for grades D and F included poor work habits and students' failure to do the required work. In many cases, a combination of these reasons was given for the low grades for the same student.

CPS efforts to improve student performance

Because some pages were receiving average final grades of C and below, we inquired what CPS was doing to help pages overcome academic difficulties, minimize the number of failing grades, and notify appropriate persons of actions taken or to be taken to help pages.

According to an offical in the DCPS Office of Communications who is responsible for publishing Superintendent's Directives, DCPS has not issued a directive concerning the preparation of reports of unsatisfactory progress and who should receive such reports. However, the agreement between the Board of Education and the Washington Teachers Union provides that, "If a student is failing a course, the teacher shall notify the student, his parent or guardian, and the principal by mid-advisory." (Underscoring added.) According to the CPS principal, mid-advisory is the middle of each grading period.

The principal told us that an unsatisfactory report is prepared by the teacher during every 9-week grading period for any page in danger of receiving an F. This report provides spaces for including the name of the student, subject,

and the reason for the poor progress, such as excessive absences or tardiness (see app. IV).

CPS also prepares a Deficiency Report (see app. IV) for each student in danger of receiving an F in any of his or her subjects. This report is prepared for each student receiving an unsatisfactory progress report and generally includes the same information as the unsatisfactory progress report, plus a section for comments by the teacher and parent.

The CPS principal stated that he counsels all students who receive reports of unsatisfactory progress. If a student does not improve after counseling, the principal may call the students' parents, congressional sponsor, and work supervisor. If the student still does not improve, the principal said he sends a letter to the parents, congressional sponsor, and work supervisor detailing major problems that are causing the low grades.

Copies of student deficiency reports are sent to the pages' parents, congressional sponsors, the Doorkeeper, and Sergeant at Arms. Also, the Chairman of the House Democratic Personnel Committee is notified of those pages who receive deficiency reports. The principal said that at the end of each 9-week grading period he sends a letter to the Chairman of the House Democratic Personnel Committee, the Doorkeeper, and Sergeant at Arms listing all pages with a below-C average. A student report card is also sent to the pages' parents; Chairman, House Democratic Personnel Committee; Doorkeeper; and Sergeant at Arms.

According to the Deputy Doorkeeper and an official in the office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms, information received from CPS is distributed to the pages' supervisor who, in some cases, distributes the information to other interested congressional offices, such as the House Republican Personnel Committee. The CPS principal stated that deficiency reports and information on grades have not been requested by other interested committees in the House or Senate.

Although CPS reports provide the recipients data on how pages are performing in class, they do not show what is being done by CPS to help pages improve their performance and what, if anything, should be done by the recipient of the report. It seems that the inclusion of this data would be informative to the recipients and assist them in evaluating the pages' progress and deciding what should be done. For example, the

deficiency report includes a section for a note to the parent. Although not currently being done generally, the report could include comments on whether the page was counseled by CPS, the agreements reached, recommendations for improving performance, and what is being done to ensure that academic improvement will be achieved.

Under existing practice, reports are not prepared for students who may be in danger of receiving a final average grade of C or below for pages appointed by House Republican members and D or below for other pages. Reports are prepared only for students who are in danger of receiving an F. The CPS principal was not aware of the House Republican rule requiring pages appointed by their members to maintain a B average while attending CPS. In school year 1977-78, 14 pages were required to maintain a B average. Of these pages, one received a final average grade of C. Of pages required to maintain a C average, 15 received final average grades of D or below.

When a student is experiencing learning difficulties which could result in an unacceptable grade, the teachers decide whether a report should be prepared. If the specified grade requirement for retention in CPS is to be maintained, this report procedure should be improved. If a student is not receiving the specified grades for retention in CPS, it is not known until the end of the grading period, too late for any remedial action. A timely report prepared for each student would enable interested parties to take action to minimize unacceptable academic performance. Because some CPS students are away from home and are not under direct parental supervision, we believe that such reporting is necessary.

INCORRECT SALARY PAID TO THE BASKETBALL COACH

DCPS has included in its annual budget funds for an evening school teacher. The CPS has not employed an evening school teacher; instead, for the years reviewed the funds were used to pay for a teacher to coach the CPS basketball team. The amount paid to the coach for the 3 years was about $2,500 more than the amount authorized.

Public Law 89-810, dated November 13, 1966, as amended, provides that the Board of Education is authorized to pay any employee of DCPS an additional annual compensation for extra duty activities performed on a continuing basis in addition to the employee's standard work assignment.

Initially the amount of additional compensation was limited to $750 for any school year. In 1970 the limit payable was increased to $1,000.

During school years 1975-76 through 1977-78, (the period covered by our review) CPS employed a teacher as the school's basketball coach. The coach was paid at an evening school teacher's salary rate. DCPS budget allotment control records showed that $1,800 was allotted each year for evening teachers' salary. Extra duty pay rates established by the Board of Education and in effect during the same time period provided, however, that the maximum additional compensation payable to a basketball coach would be $1,000 a year. The following table shows for fiscal years 1976-78 the evening teacher salary paid the CPS basketball coach and the authorized salary for basketball coaches.

Fiscal year	Salary paid CPS basketball coach	Authorized extra duty pay	Salary in excess of authorization
1976	$1,864	$1,000	$ 864
1977	1,869	1,000	869
1978	1,737	1,000	737
Total	$5,470	$3,000	$2,470

The principal at CPS advised us that a basketball coach has been employed at the school since 1951. He told us that when the pay scale for extra duty activities was established, CPS failed to make the change in the basketball coach's salary. We did not examine salary payments to coaches prior to fiscal year 1976. Salaries paid other teachers in school year 1978 were correct.

In August 1978, we discussed the salary payments for the coach with DCPS officials who agreed that the coach was overpaid. The additional compensation for the coach was changed beginning with school year 1978-79 from an evening school teacher category to an extra duty rate. Also, District FOD officials agreed to investigate the extent of the total overpayments to CPS coaches and determine whether recovery of overpayments could be made under applicable laws.

SELECTION OF CPS TEACHERS

In July and September 1976, the House Committee on Education and Labor held hearings on the operations of CPS. There was some discussion that DCPS was not using competitive selection within DCPS to fill teacher vacancies at CPS; instead, there was a tendency toward favoritism. During the hearings the CPS principal said that he recommended who should fill a vacancy at CPS on the basis of his knowledge of who was interested in teaching at CPS. He testified that vacancies at CPS were not posted throughout the DCPS. The principal said that as a result of the hearings, he no longer becomes involved in the selection of teachers to fill CPS vacancies.

According to the DCPS Director, Division of Personnel, the procedures now being followed for replacing CPS teachers who retire, leave, or transfer to another school are the same as those followed for other schools in DCPS. The procedures are as follows.

In April each year principals notify the regional superintendents of all known vacancies for the forthcoming school year. The regional superintendent advises the DCPS' personnel office and a list of all the vacancies is prepared and distributed to all school personnel. Any teacher within the DCPS system applying to fill the vacancy must be certified by DCPS as being qualified for the position. They also must be willing to start work at 6 a.m. and teach more than one subject to different grade levels. If more than one person applies for the vacancy and all are equally qualified, according to the Director, Division of Personnel, the selection is based on seniority.

If no person within DCPS applies for the job or those who applied are not qualified, the vacancy is filled from outside DCPS. Regional superintendents interview the applicants and recommend to the personnel office the applicant considered qualified to fill the position.

If a vacancy occurs during the school year, DCPS will generally attempt to find a replacement from outside the school system. According to DCPS officials, this procedure is followed to avoid disruption of ongoing classes which could be detrimental to student activities and the educational program.

We reviewed available information for fiscal years 1976-78 to determine the number of vacancies at CPS and

the manner in which they were filled. The following table shows the vacancies for these years.

	Instructional department	Reasons for vacancy	Date of vacancy	Date vacancy filled	Vacancy filled from outside/inside DCPS
1.	Science/ Geometry	retirement	June 1978	October 1978	outside
2.	Math/Physics	transfer	April 1978	April 1978	outside
3.	English	transfer	June 1976	September 1976	inside
4.	Social Studies	retirement	December 1975	January 1976	inside

Two vacancies occurred in 1978, one in 1976, and one in 1975. The 1975 vacancy occurred prior to the hearings held by the House Committee on Education and Labor in 1976. According to the Director, Divison of Personnel, the selection of the Math/Physics teacher was made by the Deputy Assistant Superintendent Region IV from a list of eligible teachers certified by the DCPS Board of Examiners. The Director said that records were not available supporting the actions taken to fill vacancies 1 and 3. Data was not available showing the number of teachers applying to fill these vacancies, whether the vacancies filled from within DCPS were based on seniority, or who recommended the applicants for the job. Thus, we were unable to verify whether vacancies 1 and 3 were filled according to procedures.

Current procedures, if followed, should provide greater assurance that there will be better competition for CPS teacher vacancies.

USE OF SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND OTHER SUBJECTS

According to the CPS principal, the School attempts to obtain, whenever possible, a substitute teacher when the regular teacher is absent. To be eligible to teach at CPS, a substitute teacher must be certified by the DCPS Board of Examiners.

During school year 1977-78, the teacher who taught French and Spanish classes was absent for 38 days, mostly because of illness, during the period November 7, 1977 to April 17, 1978. Eighteen schoolday absences were in February 1978 and 9 schoolday absences were in April 1978. The remaining 11 day absences were scattered throughout the 6-month period. There was an average of 21 students enrolled in the classes during this period.

A substitute teacher was obtained for 7 days in April 1978. French and Spanish classes were not held for the remaining 31 days. According to school officials, students spent their scheduled class time in study period.

The CPS principal told us that he did not attempt to obtain a substitute until April 1978 because the teacher often promised to report for work but failed to return. He said also that he did not request a replacement from the list of approved substitutes.

The CPS principal said that extended teacher absences similar to the absence of the foreign language teacher had not occurred in the past. He said that he erred in not promptly obtaining a substitute for the foreign language teacher and that, if a similar situation arises in the future, every effort will be made to call immediately for a substitute.

In October 1978 the same foreign language teacher took leave of absence from CPS. From the beginning of the 1978-79 school year to the date the teacher took leave of absence, she had been absent 4 days. According to CPS records, two of these absences were covered by substitutes. The CPS administrative aide, who is responsible for calling substitutes, stated that because the teacher did not report that she would be out until the day of the absences substitutes were not called for the other 2 days.

We reviewed CPS records for 3 school years to determine the number of absences for all teachers and whether substitute teachers were obtained. The results are shown in the following table.

Number of Teacher Absences and the Number of Substitutes

Courses	1975-76			1976-77			1977-78		
	Absences	Substitutes	Percent	Absences	Substitutes	Percent	Absences	Substitutes	Percent
Math/Physics	5	3	60	0	0	N/A	4	0	0
Science/ Geometry	9	5	56	4	0	0	0	0	N/A
Business	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A	5	3	60
Social Studies	4	4	100	2	2	100	9	6	67
Foreign Language	2	0	0	5	0	0	38	7	18
English	5	5	100	6	1	17	6	1	17
Totals	25	17		17	3		62	17	

For the 3-year period (excluding the foreign language teacher absences in school year 1977-78) teacher absences totaled 66 days. Substitute teachers were obtained for 30 of the 66 days.

CPS policy requires that, except for an emergency or illness, teachers will give the school 24 hours advance notice when they plan to be absent from class. This advance notice provides CPS with time to obtain a substitute teacher. The CPS principal told us that in many cases he does not know that a teacher will be absent until 6 a.m. In these cases, he said, substitutes are not requested because most classes would have ended by the time the substitute arrived (classes start at 6:10 a.m. and end at 10:30 a.m.). The principal told us also that it is difficult to obtain a substitute because of the teaching credentials required for CPS, that is, teachers generally must be able to teach more than one subject at different grade levels on the same day.

CPS did not maintain records documenting what time teachers called to notify the school that they would be absent and whether the school requested a substitute in those cases where the teachers gave advance notices of their planned absence. Without such information we could not evaluate CPS' efforts to obtain substitute teachers and minimize unfilled teacher absences.

CONCLUSIONS

Although deficiency reports are prepared for pages in danger of failing a subject, reports do not include information that could assist sponsors, parents, and other interested congressional parties in evaluating the Pages' academic performance. Mid-advisory reports are not prepared for pages having difficulty in maintaining required grades for retention in CPS.

CPS overpaid the basketball coach about $2,500 for school years 1975-78. Other CPS teachers were paid at the correct salary rates. DCPS agreed to investigate the facts surrounding the payments to the basketball coach and determine whether recovery of overpayments could be made under applicable laws.

Records were not maintained to document how teachers were selected. The procedures currently followed for selecting teachers to replace those who leave CPS provide for filling vacancies competitively.

CPS erred in not seeking a substitute teacher during the absence of the foreign language teacher. However, this case was not typical of teacher absences at CPS for the years we reviewed. Records are not available to allow us to examine the adequacy of actions taken by CPS to obtain a substitute teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board of Education should:

--Direct CPS to include comments on deficiency reports concerning the actions needed by the pages to improve academic performance and prepare mid-advisory reports for pages who are not maintaining required grades for retention in CPS.

--Consult with interested congressional parties to determine the kind of information that should be provided on pages who do not maintain prescribed academic levels.

--Insure that DCPS investigates the overpayment to the basketball coach and determines whether any financial recovery can be made.

--Instruct DCPS to document its actions concerning recruitment of teachers to fill CPS vacancies.

--Insure that CPS documents its actions to obtain substitute teachers.

AGENCY COMMENTS

In a meeting with the Deputy Superintendent concerning the report, he said that DCPS agrees with the GAO recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Capitol Page School Teacher Credentials School Year 1977-78

Teacher	
A	Masters Degree plus 9 credits Teaching Experience: 19 years
B	Masters Degree plus 50 credits Teaching Experience: 38 years
C	Masters Degree Teaching Experience: 8 years
D	Bachelor Degree plus 6 credits Teaching Experience: 1 year
E	Masters Degree plus 36 credits Teaching Experience: 23 years
F	Masters Degree plus 30 credits Teaching Experience: 34 years

APPENDIX II

Capitol Page School Payments

Fiscal Year 1978

As of December 31, 1978

Expenditure category		
Personnel (teachers, principal, and aide)	Salaries	$171,615
	Benefits	16,798
Substitute teachers	Salaries	595
	Benefits	36
Basketball coach	Salaries	1,737
	Benefits	105
Supplies		568
Textbooks		2,175
Gym Rental		500
Newspapers and periodicals		599
Lab specimens		109
Office and classroom equipment		254
Miscellaneous		463
Total		$195,554

APPENDIX III

Credentials of Panel Members From the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare

Member A

Program Officer, HEW, Office of Education--10 years
Section Chief, HEW, Office of Education--2 years
Publications Officer, Office of Education--3 years
School District Instructional Materials Specialist--2 years
Program Specialist, National Education Association--6 years
High School Teacher--2 years
Assistant to School Superintendent--1 year
College Teacher of English--2 years
Education: BA in English
MA in English
EDD in Education Administration

Member B

Branch Chief, HEW, Office of Education--8 years
Program Officer, HEW, Office of Education--2 years
Director of Extension Services at a State College--2 years
Superintendent of Schools--2 years
High School Principal--3 years
Teacher--6 years
Education: BA in Business Administration
MA in School Administration
Graduate School--Business Administration
1 year and School Administration 1 year

Member C

Program Officer, U.S. Office of Education--10 years
School District Superintendent--8 years
Teacher--12 years
Education: BA in Education
MA in Vocational Education
EDD in Education Administration

APPENDIX IV

CAPITOL PAGE SCHOOL

Teacher's Report of Unsatisfactory Progress

Date .

Name: .... is failing in ..
(Subject)

In my opinion the poor progress is due to:

Insufficient study	—	Poor reading ability	—
Failure to do required work	—	Difficulty in combining school work with employment	—
Inattentiveness	—	Excessive absence or tardiness	—
Insufficient sleep	—		—

.. .. Teacher

STUDENT'S NAME	**DEFICIENCY REPORT**	DATE
	PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	TEACHER
	SCHOOL	SUBJECT/GRADE

NOTICE TO PARENT

1. The student is showing a reading difficulty in the subject and considerable room for the danger of failure
2. It is necessary that the cause(s) of the deficiency be understood and the recommendations be followed

CAUSE(S) FOR DEFICIENCY

- ☐ Does not do required work
- ☐ Lack of interest and effort
- ☐ Lack of confidence
- ☐ Poor attendance/excessive absence
- Dates _____
- ☐ Poor class test scores
- ☐ Lack of basic reading/mathematics skills
- ☐ Inappropriate written comments or notes

- ☐ CONFERENCE WITH TEACHER NECESSARY (I am available on _____ at _____ AM/PM)
- ☐ CONFERENCE OPTIONAL
- ☐ NOTE TO PARENT _____

TEACHER'S SIGNATURE

- ☐ Note to the Teacher _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE

Form 630 PLEASE RETURN THIS NOTICE TO THE TEACHER

APPENDIX V

Different Suggestions From Concerned Parties For CPS Operation Changes 1/

Operations:	Remove from control of DCPS and make the school a private institution.
	Make more extensive use of the supervised study program (pages continue studies from their home schools) for high school students. It would avoid disruption of the back-home instructional program. Students could take courses from their home school districts and obtain help from District teachers as needed.
	Close CPS and use area colleges and appoint only college level students as pages.
	Expand faculty by using visiting professors.
	Remove CPS from DCPS and contract with some other area school districts to operate the school.
Facilities:	Expand operations in the Library of Congress.
	Construct new school facility including dormitories.
	Remove CPS from Library of Congress and use available District schools. The facilities of a nearby high school would be better designed for CPS use.

1/Note: The source of these suggestions were from the following:

1976 congressional hearings on CPS operation.
Office of Education panel members who commented on CPS operations.
The Librarian of Congress.
Principal of Capitol Page School.
Office of the Doorkeeper, U.S. House of Representatives

APPENDIX V

Appointments: One semester minimum. This would provide an orderly procedure for educating pages if there is not a constant inflow and outflow of students.

One year appointments. Will provide appointees optimum experience in learning the legislative process and provide adequate service as pages. At the same time it would permit CPS staff to plan for and provide an improved instructional program for a more stable student body.

One-year appointments would reduce the administrative work associated with entering and departing pages and allow activities to be planned in advance based on sure knowledge of class composition and needs.

Senior year in high school. This will allow the school to focus on 1 year of instruction. It will allow for advanced classes at the school and help insure minimum level of maturity among the pages.

Eleventh and twelfth graders only. It would eliminate the problem of 14- and 15-year old students living alone in Washington and would relieve teachers of the burden of teaching four levels of the same subject. Teachers could concentrate their teaching at two levels instead of four.

Compensation: Continue the current salaries but require pages to pay for room and board which would be used to help finance a new school/dormitory.

Make the pay for Senate and House pages the same.

(428070)